

Sending The Wrong Message

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Summary: This story follows Second Lieutenant Dann Rollins of the GGS (Private Sector) as he faces dangers that no other Runner has had to face.

1. Chapter 1

****Sending The Wrong Message****

I've been told by a few peers that this chapter is confusing and that it doesn't really seem to have a plot yet, but that's the point of this chapter. It just introduces you to the mind of Second Lieutenant Dann Rollins. Please feel free to leave a review on what you think. It can really help the writing progress. Thanks. Enjoy.

Chapter 1: The Beginning

All I heard was the soft crunch of the damp shrubs beneath my black boots, followed by a out of place sound of a metal ping. That's all the noise I heard before I was on the ground, removing my M-88 ABS helmet, quickly pulling my M-15 gas mask from its position on my hip, and putting it on my face, covering my black balaclava. Out of instinct I began securing the straps, and replacing my black helmet atop my head.

The forest, which just a few moments ago was bright, warmly calming, and had a similar scent to that of the forest behind my Nana's house, was now dark and had a tint of evil because of the sunglass like material covering the eyeholes of my mask. I took a deep breath and tried to calm myself, but I knew, from my training, that I needed to start running. I slowed down my breathing, tensed my legs, my arms, and my lower back muscles and, like a jaguar, pounced up from my prone position and began to run at a 45 degree angle left of the direction I was originally headed.

I kept my Whetstone M182 pointed downwards and at a diagonal angle, aiming just a few centimeters outside of my left leg as I ran. I kept

my head down as I sprinted away from the trapping place, my eyes almost fixated on the tip of my rifle running along side me. I glanced up every now and again to avoid trees, branches, twigs, bushes, and the occasional plant life. I ducked, juked, slid, hopped, and rolled over anything in my path, which for right now was only Mother Nature. She didn't pose a threat to me though, all of her guards standing still, almost lifelessly. They just produced obstacles to tell the real threat where I was, and where I was headed.

I slowed my running and turned, pulling my rifle up to my shoulder hard. The butt of the weapon giving me a false sense of security behind the black mechanism. I could barely keep it steady, my heavy breathing affecting my aim. My eyes began to look past the red-dot holographic sight and into Mother Nature's den, trying to find some trace of something following me. Of them following me. I saw and heard nothing and my nerves started to cool down. I walked backwards and after a while I turned around.

I began to look around at the floor of Nature's mess. I let my hands drop from my rifle as gravity took over and the sling over my shoulder caused the weapon to fall to my side, like a pendulum. The rifle kept up with me as I looked around the leaf covered earth. After a few minutes of searching, I started to follow my original path, turning 45 degrees to my right and slowly I began walking the trail that I was set on traveling.

For hours nothing interesting happened. I walked and walked and walked. I walked until my feet hurt, but I continued walking. I didn't stop. I couldn't stop. I knew that the reason why I was walking was more important than me. I knew that the message I had to send could really help the people down at Echo. I knew that, so I walked. To try and pass the time as I walked, I started to play an old child's game: "I spy", until I realized that that was redundant as I knew what it was I was looking at. I started to whistle an old tune that was supposedly played in bars back in the 20th century. I wandered, almost aimlessly. To keep myself busy I argued with myself. I thought of issues back on Earth, or back in the 21st century that I read about, or even just small things that I was divided about internally, or things that made me wonder at work.

I started off with an old argument that happened back in 2014, right after the Olympics, which, despite Alien contact and war, was still a thing today. Right after the country of Russia hosted the Olympics, a country to the west, called the Ukraine was having a civil war with an oppressive government that the people forced out. The country planned on having a democratic election in either April or May to start their new government, until the country of Russia, supposedly 'did not' invade, even though there were soldiers in the area called Crimea who were wearing Russian uniforms, with Russian weapons, Russian tanks, and, as some speculated, were being funded by Russia. The only reason no one said that Russia was invading Crimea and the Ukraine was because these soldiers, "Unaffiliated militia" the Russians called them, lacked the official Russian emblem on their clothes. Other points defending Russia were that the area of Crimea, which was a heavily sought after bay area of the Black Sea and the Azov Sea, was heavily populated by Russians who lived there prior to Ukraine taking hold of the area. People pointed at the Russian population that lived there and said it was them, and not the Russian government.

I scratched my neck. I was having a hard time remembering all of the details. I don't remember what happened in the area, or the aftermath, but I knew it raised tensions between the UN and Russia.

I walked, my weapons at my side, pushing through the brush of this foreign land. I stopped and closed my eyes and stretched really big. My back popped a few times, and the release of tension felt great.

As I continued I thought of other things throughout history. I tried to think of some of the funnier moments in history, to try and push back the dark thoughts of war. I thought about the time that a Roman emperor ordered his army to go and attack the water because he declared war on Neptune, the Roman god of the sea. I thought about the time that there were three popes in the Roman Catholic church, and how they all excommunicated each other. One was in France, the other in Rome, and the other was in Germany. I think. I can't be too sure about the last one. Maybe he was in England. I wouldn't see why not. The only other thing I can think of that was really funny was when Austria, a country just north of Italy, and south of Germany, attacked itself with an army of about 10,000 men, and lost over 200 of their own soldiers before they stopped.

I couldn't really think of much else, except maybe the absurdity that marriage between two guys or gals, and the right to a safe and private abortion, were both attacked in the 21st century even after Roe v Wade, which promised women to the right of privacy, or not having to jump through a bunch of hurdles to get an abortion, and it being stated in the United States Constitution that a law cannot be passed that attacks only one group of people, or stating that all men are created equal. Part of me wanted to laugh, while the other part wanted to cry at the Americans of the 21st century.

Thinking about discrimination made me think of an issue that was recently coming up between the Human colonies and the aliens who sided with us after the war. And speaking of the Olympics made me think of it too. There is recent debate with the Olympics coming around soon if aliens are going to be allowed to compete in the Olympics or if they're going to be given their own league. Personally I felt as though they should be given their own league, which "separate, but equal" doesn't always work, but the Sangheili are far more superior than humans in almost every physical aspect and forcing people to have to compete against them would be completely unfair. Though maybe humans could win at swimming. I've never seen a Sangheili swim before. The thought of it made me smile.

I pressed my ear piece and it pulled up my clock, as well as health status, weapon statuses, coms, and compass. I checked the time. Only an hour had passed. My shoulders slumped, but I quickly regained form. No need to be unalert just because there is no one around. I clicked my ear piece again and shut it down.

At this point I just let my mind go blank and instead of occupying it myself, I let the surroundings of nature occupy my mind. I listened to everything moving around, the birds, and insects, and the reptiles, and frogs cricket, slither, chirp, or call out in some way, I let those sounds fill my ears instead of my own thoughts, but despite Mother Nature's pets calling out to one another, it felt

silent. A silence before the storm, though I hoped and prayed that I was going to be wrong. I didn't want to get into a fight, and I sure as hell didn't want to know what was possibly hunting me. I pushed those thoughts out, though. I didn't need those ones.

Nothing I did made time pass. I was bored. Bored out of my mind. Boredom was killing me. And the silence of boredom was murder.

There was nothing to occupy me, so I played a game of how long can I keep kicking this one rock before it goes too far that I lose it, or it gets outside of my path.

I started kicking the first one that was in front of me when I made up my mind to play this incredibly simple game. I made it about 50 paces before I got too excited and kicked it a bit farther than I meant. I decided that I would stop and find it. I heard old stories of soldiers in the late 20th century keeping a rock in their pocket to roll around to pass time. When I finally found it again I stooped over and gently secured the smooth rock in my hand. I rolled it around, examining the odd stone. It was a light gray, like most rocks. Nothing too remarkable about it, besides its smoothness in a forest. Such findings were rare. I took the rock and put it in my pocket and rolled it around, feeling the smooth, yet firm surface.

I continued my walk until the real darkness started to make itself visible. I continued my march until the fatigue really hit me. Letting out a tired breath, I found a fallen tree and I sat next to it, letting my back rest against it. I undid the black strap holding my helmet in place and removed it. I reached into a pouch on my UTG tactical vest and pulled out a dull orange handkerchief. I swabbed the inside of my helmet, trying to remove any moisture from the head protection. I placed the helm on the ground, opening side up. I dropped the handkerchief into the helmet as I undid the buckles holding the gask mask in place. I pulled it away from my face and reached into a different pocket and pulled out a short steel nail and a ziplock baggy. I took the nail by the head and stuck it into the gas mask. I placed it into one corner of the eye socket and gently scraped up the tinted lining covering the eye hole. I took the film, careful not smudge it, and put it inside of the ziplock bag. I did the same with the other eye. After taking out the tinted film and putting away the nail and bag, I grabbed the top of the balaclava and pulled it off my head. I dropped it inside of my helmet and ran my hands over my face. I felt the features that I've grown used to over my short life. Using my fingers, I ran them over my jawline, feeling the consequence of not shaving for a couple days. I reached into my helmet and got my handkerchief and swabbed up the sweat that was still on my face. I started to feel around my belt until my hands found my canteen. I brought it up to my face and unscrewed the top. I brought the cold metal up to my lips and let the water stream into my mouth. I swished it around my dry mouth and spit it back out. I took another small drink and resealed my only water supply. Dropping it, the zip cord placed it back on my hip. I put the rag back into the correct pocket, followed by pulling the damp balaclava back on. I put my mask and my helmet back on and stood up. I ran my tongue along my teeth, my mouth was still kinda dry, but it was better since the drink.

Renewed, and now with better vision, I set off, again in the original direction of my orders. I hadn't been told what to expect out in the forest, but I knew where I was going and which direction it was. I

was headed towards Firebase Echo, where the forest met with a great plains region. I had gotten the order from Commander Constance Drake back at General Genetics Security, a private military sector under the branch of a GMO company; probably the only reason they got the grant from the UN for space exploration. I don't have anything against Commander Constance Drake, GGS, or the UN, but it's silly the little secrets you learn when you work for the company.

(General Genetics Security started as a GMO company's security force back in the late 23rd century, a separate branch of the Phonsanti company, which has been around since the 1800s. During certain rebellion attacks that damaged Phonsanti's property, they decided that they needed a group of people who would stop the damage to the local farmer's property and their research. After the human rebellion in the beginning of the 2500s and the abandonment of farms on foreign worlds, and then damage to those properties, or the murder, capture, or wounding of egg-heads, Phonsanti decided that they were going to pump more money into the security force and give it a bit more power within the company, as well as to update some outdated weapon systems. During the Great War, GGS proved to be very useful as protection against rebellion attacks targeting the further away worlds. GGS never combat with the Covenant, except once. Though I don't remember the outcome, it is rarely talked about in the office for whatever reason.

I started working with GGS back in 2553, right after the Great War. I've really only been with the company for 3 years, yet it feels so much longer. After I graduated from Arizona State University with a bachelors in Military History, I joined GGS at the rank of Petty Officer. I didn't have many friends when I joined because many people thought I didn't talk much, but after it came out that I was a mute, people started to lighten up to me.

I reached the rank I am today, that of Second Lieutenant, by doing some very dangerous runs. As a mute I'm not allowed in active duty. The most I was able to fight for was to run messages and deliver important packages to certain Firebases all over the galaxy.)

I stopped thinking about my past and focused on my walking. It finally got too dark, and unlike Reach, but a lot like Harvest, this planet didn't have a moon, so when night-fall came, it was pitch-black. I turned on a weak flashlight and searched for a hollowed out tree. After walking for a few meters, I came across one. It was just wide enough too. I quickly turned off the flashlight and stuck it into my left pants pocket. I reached up and grabbed the mouth of the tree and pulled myself up and over into the tree. I landed with a light thud as my boots slammed against the ground. I sat down, with my knees about 15 centimeters away from my chest.

I removed my helmet, my gas mask, and my balaclava. I placed them on my lap, with the balaclava in the helmet, and my gas mask acting as a lid to the helm. I ran my hands through my short hair, trying to get rid of the sticky feeling of hat hair. I rubbed my hands against my face too, but the rough material that covered my palms felt weird against my sensitive skin. I grabbed my canteen and took a drink, screwing the cap back on, I let it fall. I started to search around my vest before I checked my pants pockets. I opened the one on my right thigh and found what I was looking for. A mostly eaten dark chocolate bar with nuts in it. It wasn't much of a meal, but the chocolate was good for the heart and the nuts had protein. I

unwrapped it and took a bite.

As I ate, flashes of what I saw yesterday and today seized my mind. I couldn't stop thinking about yesterday. I shook my head and tried to clear the thoughts away from my brain. I stopped eating and sat there in disgust at my situation.

By the time I wrapped it back up and put it away I had eaten a half of what was left, which I guessed was just about a half as well.

I let my head fall against the trunk of the tree and let my eyes drop. My dreams taking my exhausted form quickly.

2. Chapter 2

The hardest part of writing an action/war story is that there are not words in the English language that can convey how intense certain scenes are. There is scene in this chapter that I tried my best to tell you guys how scary and how fucked the main character feels, but no matter what, I felt as though it just wasn't enough. Add on top of that that the main character is a mute, I can have him scream, shout, yell, convey verbally how scared he is. I can't have him scream at the top of his lungs as he charges into battle, and I guess that's the challenge I took writing this story. I'll stop rambling, here you go:

Chapter 2: What do you mean? Package?

A loud crackling noise statics into my earpiece followed by a feminine voice, "Lieutenant Rollins, report to the GGSBR ASAP." I nod even though it does nothing for anyone and head towards the General Genetics Security Briefing Room. I take a left down the nearest corridor and followed it for just under 78 paces; the whole while my feet slowly picking up the pace with a small sense of urgency. My thoughts start to get a bit giddy. I wonder what the run will be this time? I don't think I've done anything this far outside of the inner colonies before. My thoughts rampantly running through my mind.

_ When I get outside of the door I look down at my uniform, a form fitting black turtle neck with the GGS emblem of two rifles crossing over a beaker in a slight silver thread. I have the sleeves pulled up to my elbows. Adorning the sweater is a Purple Heart medal and a few badges of minor significance. Beige khakis and my Tactical Boots, with the pants tucked in to the mouth of the boots._

_ I knock the back of my hand against the door, letting them know I'm here. The door slowly slides open to a dark room. I walk inside, squinting as my eyes get used to the dark room with a large bright screen to the right glaring at me with its bright blue lighting. I walk up to my commander and give off a quick salute before sitting down at the briefing chair. Commander Steele, Commander Drake's right hand man, was the only other one in the room. I raised an eyebrow at him, but he paid no attention to me. _

_ I sat and waited, slowly slouching form the slick surface of the chair. After a while, as my back was almost at 30 degree angle with the back of the chair. I quickly fixed my posture, my back starting to ache. It had only been a few minutes. Maybe two or three, but it felt like a millennium. The whole time my head kept wondering what

the run was going to be. I started to strum my fingers along the table in front of me when the door opened. _

_ Commander Constance Drake came through the door and I stood as quick as my stiff muscles would let me and gave off a crisp salute, holding it until she gave me the orders to stand down. I let out a deep breath and sat back down. She walked over to Commander Steele and handed him a small manila envelope and whispered something into his ear and left. I sat there confused. I slowly stood up and approached Commander Steele with a questioning look._

_ He looked like he was biting his tongue, to me. He let out a deep sigh, looked down, and then turned towards me._

_ "Here you go," He spoke in his almost rusty southern accent. I thought of the irony between the comparison of his voice and his name, with stainless steel being impervious to the stuff, but that's irrelevant. Steele handed the manila envelope to me. "Have a seat, and I'll tell you what you need to know." He finished the sentence as the doors closed behind Drake. I nodded quickly and took the small envelope from him. All the while questions bounced through my mind, but I kept them quiet as I did my best to pay attention to Steele. I sat back down in the chair as Steele sat across from me._

_ "You're being deployed on Alpha Omega Delta 4, just outside of the inner colony zone. Strange, I know. We don't usually do drops this far out, due to lack of financial interest from the big-wigs, but this run was dropped off at Phonsanti's front door, with promise of land, and a big payload, so GGS's head jumped on that thing faster than a knife fight in a phone booth."_

_ I smiled at his 'southern-isms', that's what the crew called them anyway._

_ "So, you're going to take that," He pointed at the envelope in my hand, "down to Firebase Echo on Alpha Omega Delta 4, or AOD4, and then come back up. Easy peasy right? Wrong. There isn't a good LZ at Firebase Echo, and we can't let you drop from a pelican down due to wind currents in the sky. So," He pulled up a map on the holographic screen behind him and pointed at a small dot outside of a forest, "You'll be dropped there, you'll walk for about a six, seven hours, nothing you can't handle, and deliver the package. They will then lend us a pelican and take you back up here, rodger?"_

_ I nodded as I stood up. I gave off a quick salute and started for the door. I felt a hand grab my shoulder and I turned around with a puzzled look on my face._

_ "When you're packing for your vacation, make sure to take your boomstick and something a little more powerful than your average pea shooter. I've got a bad feeling about this one." I licked my lips and hesitantly gave him the "okay" sign. He nodded firmly, with direct eye contact._

_ I turned and headed out of the dark room and back into the white hallways of the spaceship. Just beyond that, the blackness of space. I squinted and rubbed my eyes, the brightness almost unbearable. I turned back towards the corridor that I had walked down just minutes prior. _

_ The insignificant weight of the small envelope suddenly becoming much heavier with the words or precaution from Steele._

_ As I got back to my small dorm like room, I pressed a button by the door and it locked behind me as the room switched from a bedroom to a bathroom. The bed acting a Murphy bed and lifting up into the closet. The carper pulling back, revealing tile and a drain. A shower head lowered from the ceiling._

_ After showering, I walked back over to door, pressed the button to turn the bathroom back into the small dorm like bedroom. I quickly dried off and grabbed an olive-drab tank top, black BDU trousers, underwear, and socks. As I pulled them on I started to shuffle around grabbing equipment that I'd need, and pulling them on as well. This included elbow and knee pads, and UTG Tactical vest. For weapons I grabbed my standard edition Whetstone M182, UKARMS 1911, and an UC 2863 double sided bowie knife. I looked around, checking for anything that I might have missed; all the while Steele's warning ringing in my ears. His paranoia was getting to me, so I grabbed my Hogue Stock Mossberg 500 as he suggested I do._

_ I grabbed my gas mask and placed the straps around the belt of the vest, snapping it in place. I placed the balaclava inside of my M-88 and carried that under my arms, with my shotgun draped across my back, my M182 under my other arm, hanging by the strap, my pistol on my left hip, and the bowie knife just above my rear._

_ I left my dorm and headed for shipping deck where I would wait for the pelican to take off. As I walked through the white halls I heard a horrific scream._

My eyes shot open and I quickly grabbed my Hogue Stock Mossberg 500 shotgun and aimed it at the mouth of the tree stump. My breathing was ragged, but it was quiet, so whatever made that noise couldn't hear me. I could feel my heart beating hard against my chest, I was unsure how whatever it was outside didn't hear my chest thumping away. The power behind my hearts beats almost made it seem like it was going to break my ribs, so it could make its escape away from this devil creature. I slowly moved my head back and pressed my ear against the tree, listening for any movement, but that was my mistake. The thing screamed again, and it felt like it was right into my ear. I bite my lip hard enough to make it bleed, my left hand shooting up to cover my ear. I guess I would have whimpered in pain, but my disability left me to suffer in the silence. The sound was deafening, horrifying even, and it scared the shit out of me. I felt the sweat of fear start to drip down my face. My only thoughts being, "I don't want to die, I don't want to die. Not here, not like this! Not on a planet where no one knows where I am!" Over and over again, "I don't want to die, I don't want to die, I do NOT WANT to die!". Terror sweeping through my mind, worse than what happened yesterday with the gas mine scare.

After cursing up and down and kicking myself, I hesitated, but put my ear back against the tree, this time, instead of the scream, I heard the footsteps. It sounded like the thing walked on two legs, but the sound was getting more and more faint, like it lost interest and was now going to search somewhere else forâ€¦ Whatever it was it was looking for. I removed my ear and let out my breath. My face must have flushed because it felt really clammy and gross. I removed my mask from my helmet and grabbed my balaclava and pulled it onto my

face. I then took the gas mask and looked at it. I glanced up at the sky and saw that light was slowly coming. I reached into my bag and pulled out the tinted film and replaced them onto the eye holes of the mask. After securing them down, I put the mask on. Then taking the helmet, I placed it onto my head.

I licked my bloody lip and I readied my shotgun. I kept aim at the mouth of the trunk as my whole being seemed to scream bloody murder in my head. I tensed my legs, my biceps and triceps and deltoids. My pronator teres, and brachioradialis were tensed. I wanted to throw up, I wanted to cry, my whole body wracked with stress and fear of death. I could feel knots forming in my muscle tissue from how stiff my whole body was, and yet, I was trembling. Like jell-o that I'd make as a kid. My lips wouldn't stop, it felt like they were stuck in a permanent pout. My teeth were chattering in my mouth as if I was cold. A cold sweat. With hot flashes. I wanted to go back to the man who contacted me for work and punch him with all my might. I wanted to see my parents again. Tell my mom how much she meant to me. Tell my dad that I wish I exceeded his expectations of my life. I wanted to go back to my teachers and thank them. Adrenaline was coursing through my veins and arteries. I felt as though anything would be easier than what I was going to do. I could run a marathon with how much I felt the need to run. Self-pity flooded my systems making my arms, face, and neck go cold. I sat there wallowing in guilt and despair. Fear fully taking over my body. It wasn't until I remembered what I had seen two days ago, the desiccation, and death, that I gathered the strength I needed. I felt a single tear slide down my cheek for those who fell, as fear quickly turned to anger at myself. I wanted to turn all of that anger out on this thing. Not only would I kill this bastard, I could gut the little shit. I used all of my tenseness and anger to gain the strength needed to propel my body up, and out of the trunk. I practically jumped out of the trunk, like a salmon headed against the current of the strong river. With the butt of the weapon firmly against my shoulder I leaped up, standing tall. I kept my eye down the sight as I popped up. My face almost inside of the weapon. It was so surreal as I quickly spun about looking anything that would be in my way.

But there was nothing.

As the reality, and my fear, stress, and tension all released and yet set in at the same time, I collapsed back into the trunk of the tree.

Silently, I sobbed.

End
file.